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## FOOD FOR THE ELDERLY

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In most lives, the passing of the years brings a gradual decrease in muscular activity. With less activity, the need for energy food diminishes. For people who have plenty to eat, that is a time to watch their weight, because excess quantities of energy yielding foods are stored as body fat. After middle life people also experience a slowing down of internal processes. This further reduces the amount of food required.

As compared with the 4,500 calories a man of active occupation may need at 30, say the authorities, that same man may need only 1,800 calories when he is 80 years old. A woman who at 30 years needs 2,400 calories per day may need only 1,500 at 80. With the quantity of food reduced, however, it is important to make sure that none of the essential nutrients are left out.

An elderly, inactive couple in their seventies may need something like half or two-thirds as much food as adults in their twenties or thirties. But whatever the age, a balanced diet is still needed. The elderly couple's diet includes more milk and eggs, but less of everything else.

Less fat is recommended because it digests slowly, so fried foods, rich sauces and pastries may not be good for them. They require protein, and for easy digestion it may be wise to get it chiefly from milk, cereals, eggs, finely ground meat, or flaked fish, using less meat in other forms than they used earlier in life. Minerals and vitamins are necessary for everybody, but some of the vegetables, especially the coarse greens and others with much fiber, may be hard to masticate if used raw. For the elderly person, such vegetables may be finely chopped and cooked. Sometimes raw fruits accentuate fermentation. They may be cooked until soft, or only the juices served.

Elderly people might eat oftener than three times a day, suggests the Bureau of Home Economics of the U.S.D.A. A glass of milk, a cracker or some fruit in the early morning, if they wake then, and a light breakfast later; a cup of tea or coffee or broth about four in the afternoon, and hot milk or hot broth at bedtime. These reinforcements before and between meals have been found to keep up the energy through the day and make for better sleep at night.

